

Message Text

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ACTION CU-06

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FOR IEA AND ICS/D, CINCPAC FOR USIA ADVISOR, STATE FOR CU/EA

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJ: WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS--MARCH 10-16, 1978

A. ATMOSPHERICS:

1. DOMESTIC CONCERNS, PARTICULARLY THE MAJOR IMPORT DUTY INCREASES ON MORE THAN 140 LUXURY-TYPE ITEMS AND THE UNTYING OF THE BAHT FROM THE DOLLAR, OCCUPIED THAI MEDIA ATTENTION THIS WEEK. THE DUTY HIKE TOUCHED OFF PRICE INCREASES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND A WARNING BY THE COMMERCE MINISTRY, ACTING ON ORDERS FROM PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK CHOMANAN, THE PROFITEERS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION WOULD BE CHARGED WITH ENDANGERING SOCIETY. PERSONS SO CHARGED WOULD FACE SUMMARY PUNISHMENT AND EVEN EXECUTION WITHOUT TRIAL UNDER ARTICLE 27 OF THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION. SUCH EXTREME ACTION CONSIDERED HIGHLY UNLIKELY.

2. THE CUTTING OF THE EXCLUSIVE BAHT-DOLLAR LINK CAUSED SOME INITIAL UNCERTAINTY, BUT THE RATE STABILIZED AT ITS OLD LEVEL WITHIN A DAY OR TWO.

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3. THERE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE MEDIA COMMENT ON THE RTG FINANCIAL MOVES, WITH SOME COLUMNISTS AND EDITORIAL WRITERS PRAISING AND OTHERS CONDEMNING THE MEASURES. THE COMMENTS CAUSED PRIME MINISTER KRINGSAK ON MARCH 15 TO WARN THE PRESS ABOUT ITS LANGUAGE. HE TOLD REPORTERS NOT TO ATTACK TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND THE FINANCE MINISTER, "BECAUSE I AM THE ONE WHO MADE THE DECISION."

4. THE JOINT U.S.-SOUTH KOREAN "TEAM SPIRIT" EXERCISE IS BEING COVERED, MAINLY BY CHINESE-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS USING WIRE SERVICE REPORTS. ONLY ONE EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS APPEARED TO DATE. THE INDEPENDENT HSING HSIAO JIT PAO, THAILAND'S LARGEST-CIRCULATION CHINESE-LANGUAGE PAPER, WELCOMED THE EXERCISE, SAYING MARCH 9 IT "HAS A DETERRENT EFFECT TO WARN AGAINST NORTH KOREAN WAR PROVOCATIONS AND TO SOOTHE THE ANXIETY OF SOUTH KOREANS CAUSED BY THE PLANNED WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN GROUND TROOPS." SEE BANGKOK 7592.

B. PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS:

1. ASIAN COMPOSERS: THE ASIAN COMPOSERS LEAGUE IS CURRENTLY HOLDING ITS FIFTH CONFERENCE AND FESTIVAL IN BANGKOK UNDER DIRECTION OF THE FLEDGLING COMPOSERS ASSOCIATION OF THAILAND. COMPOSERS AND MUSICIANS FROM FIFTEEN COUNTRIES ARE PARTICIPATING IN CONCERTS, WORKSHOPS AND DISCUSSIONS OF SUCH QUESTIONS AS THE NATURE OF MUSIC, TRADITION VERSUS INNOVATION, AND CULTURAL POLLUTION. POST HAS CONTRIBUTED A SMALL EXHIBIT ON AMERICAN MUSIC, IS ASSISTING WITH AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATIONS AND IS SUPPORTING A CONCERT AT THE BNC WHICH WILL INCLUDE THE WORK OF SEVERAL ASIAN-AMERICAN COMPOSERS. SEVERAL AMERICAN COMPOSERS AND ARTISTS ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE EVENT, INCLUDING ROBERT ASHLEY UNDER SPONSORSHIP OF THE JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, III, FUND.

2. NEW THEMATIC OUTREACH SERVICE: THE LIBRARY BEGAN A LIMITED UNCLASSIFIED

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DISTRIBUTION OF PERIODICAL TABLES OF CONTENTS IN FEBRUARY. OF THE 39 ADDRESSEES WHO RECEIVED TABLES OF CONTENTS FROM SELECTED PERIODICALS, FIVE RESPONDED WITH REQUESTS FOR 23 ARTICLES. NEXT MONTH, TABLES OF CONTENTS WILL GO TO ALL 55 INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR THIS SERVICE AND WHO HAVE INDICATED INTEREST IN IT. BECAUSE OF EXPENSE, THIS ACTIVITY WILL BE LIMITED TO THOSE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN THEIR PROFESSIONS.

3. SUPPORT FOR ESCAP SPEAKER: AS U.S. AMBASSADOR MELISSA WELLS READ ANDREW YOUNG'S MARCH 10 ADDRESS BEFORE THE CURRENT BANGKOK MEETING OF THE U.N. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIAN AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP), THE POST DISTRIBUTED IN THAI, CHINESE AND ENGLISH, TEXTS AND TWO RELEASES ON THE ADDRESS TO DELEGATES AND MEDIA. A PHOTO RELEASE FOLLOWED TWO HOURS LATER. THE WELLS ADDRESS RECEIVED PROMINENT COVERAGE IN LOCAL CHINESE AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPERS AND SOMEWHAT LIGHTER COVERAGE IN THE THAI PRESS. THAI-LANGUAGE SIAM RATH PRINTED A PORTION OF THE POST'S TRANSLATION OF THE ADDRESS. COMMENTING ON THE POST COVERAGE, THE UNITED NATIONS INFORMING OFFICER SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE EFFICIENCY OF THE OPERATION.

4. EXHIBITS: ABOUT 3,000 PERSONS HAVE SEEN THE TIME

COVER EXHIBIT SINCE IT OPENED IN THE BNC LIBRARY ON
MARCH 13, AND, ALTOGETHER, AN ESTIMATED 16,000 PEOPLE
HAVE VISITED THE FRONTIER EXHIBIT, STILL ON DISPLAY IN
THE BNC LOBBY.
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